

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Collaborative Task Force Prepares Cattle Owners for Animal Identification

Situation

As a result of a bovine tuberculosis (TB) outbreak in Michigan in the late 1990s, Michigan lost its TB-free status. Since then, Michigan has expended significant resources to eradicate the disease. To help accomplish this goal, the Michigan Agriculture Commission adopted a policy requiring Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) devices for cattle moving off premises after March 1, 2007. Cattle producers cannot order devices without first registering their premises.

Extension Strategy

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension initiated a Michigan RFID Education Task Force to inform the State's cattle industry about the importance of animal identification. MSU Extension invited many organizations to be partners, including the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA), Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Cattlemen's Association, and the Michigan Milk Producers Association. The partners – government, producers and industry associations – meet monthly to develop communication tools to inform the public about animal identification and premises registration. The diversity of perspectives on the Task Force ensures the tools meet the needs of the Michigan audience.

Implementation

Task Force educational programs in Michigan were widely advertised in various media and targeted several audiences. The Task Force used quarterly newsletters, press releases, and the Task Force Web site to engage large-scale producers, the youth population, and feedlot operators. Task Force members held over 50 events from April 2006 to January 2007 -- which included animal identification presentations as well as interactive demonstrations on how to properly tag animals. For example, Extension agents visited sale barns to provide demonstrations to producers. The Task Force created a variety of products, including factsheets, posters, press articles, videos, news releases, mailings, as well as radio and television spots.

Evaluation and Impact

Michigan has seen a significant rise in premises registration since the inception of the Task Force. In June 2006, less than 13,000 of approximately 29,000 livestock premises in Michigan were registered. At the beginning of February 2007, the number of premises surpassed 16,500, an increase of 27 percent. Even more telling than the numbers are the qualitative results: Task Force members earned the producers' trust by delivering consistent messages and serving as resources for accurate information that responded to the needs of Michigan's cattle owners.

Contact Information

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EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

STATE: Michigan

ESTIMATED PREMISES: 29,011

PREMISES REGISTERED: 58.6%

PROGRAM STATUS: RFID is mandatory for cattle movement

KEY STRATEGIES:

- Collaborative Task Force – including government, producers, and industry – initiated the education effort
- Diverse perspectives yielded audience-specific messages
- Frequent events included interactive demonstrations
- Advertised in various media for widespread awareness